



Study on Menstruation and Hygiene Practices among Adolescent girls in Urban Community

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a transition period from childhood to adult life during which pubertal development and sexual maturation take place, thus making physiological development a challenge adolescents have to face. There is a substantial lacuna in the knowledge towards menstruation among adolescent girls; hence, an attempt was made to study menstruation and personal hygiene among adolescent girls of urban locality. Ex post facto research design was used for the study. The locale of the study was Jadcherla town of Mahabubnagar district in Telangana State. Sample size of 30 adolescent school going girls of age group 12 to 16 yrs. was purposively selected. Structured questionnaire was used to examine the existing knowledge and hygiene practices regarding menstruation. Frequency and percentage were used to analyse the collected data. Results revealed that prior information about menstruation before its attainment was available to 80 per cent of the adolescent girls in the present study. About 93 per cent of the respondents use sanitary pads during their periods which show good hygiene practice during menstruation. About 67 per cent of the respondents do not have knowledge about the organ from where bleeding occurs. Hence, awareness needs to be given to the respondents.

Key Words: Adolescence, Hygiene practices, Menstruation, Menarche, Pads, Periods, Taboos.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is regarded, as a unique phase of human development. It is a transitional phase of growth and development between childhood and adulthood. In India, limited access to products of sanitary hygiene and lack of safe sanitary facilities could increase the likelihood of resorting to unhygienic practices to manage menstruation. All myths and taboos such as not taking bath, avoiding hot and cold foods, avoiding exercise, have no scientific support, and need to be eliminated to release menstruation anxiety among girls. An adolescent girl should be made aware of the phenomenon of menstruation before menarche, so as to enable her to accept it as a normal developmental process and manage it appropriately.

Menstrual hygiene and management can be essential in ensuring that your everyday life is not

interrupted by menstruation. It ensures that you can continue with your daily routine such as going to school, going to work or doing household chores. In this sense, maintaining proper menstrual hygiene is important for your wellbeing and development. The present investigation was undertaken to study the profile characteristics, existing knowledge about menstruation and menstrual health practices followed by adolescent girls.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

An ex-post facto research design was opted for the study in the urban area of Mahabubnagar district in Telangana state. The locale of the study was Jadcherla town of Mahabubnagar district. In this study, samples comprising of 30 adolescent school going girls were selected falling in the age group of 12-16 yr. The respondents were of 9th and 10th std. of Kakatiya Techno School. Structured questionnaire

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was used by the investigator which included general profile characteristics of the respondents. The questionnaire had two areas which consist of existing knowledge regarding menstruation and hygiene practices during menstruation of the adolescent girls. Frequency and percentage were used to analyse the collected data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio economic profile of the respondents

Majority 43 per cent of the adolescent girls were in the age of 14 yr. The nuclear families of the respondents were 90 per cent and about 53 per cent of the respondents comprised of high income. This factor may have an impact on the knowledge and management of the situation in adolescent girls (Table 1).

It was observed that about 67 per cent of the respondents did not have knowledge about the organ from where bleeding occurs and 83 per cent of the respondents received prior information before menarche from their mothers (80 %). Hema et al (2017) studied about menstrual hygiene and related personal hygiene practices among adolescent girls in rural Puducherry and reported that majority (89.2%) of the adolescent girls were using sanitary pads whereas 65.3 per cent girls changed their soaked absorbent 2-5 times in a day and unhygienic practices were noticed.

Vyas et al (2017) investigated nutritional status and personal hygiene among adolescent girls of rural Bikaner and revealed that anaemia was common problem among adolescent girls in rural area. However, the personal hygiene was good among adolescent girls. Kartik et al (2016) studied about knowledge and practices regarding menstrual hygiene among urban adolescent girls in Bangalore. They reported that 69 per cent of adolescent girls were using sanitary napkins as menstrual absorbent but there is a need to equip the adolescent girls with knowledge regarding safe, hygienic practices to enable them to lead a healthy reproductive life.

Table 1. Profile of the respondents.

Sr. No.	Variable	Respondents (N=30)	
		Number	%
1.	Age		
	12-13 yr.	8	27
	14 yr.	13	43
	15-16 yr.	9	30
2.	Type of family		
	Nuclear	27	90
	Joint	3	10
3.	Income levels (Rs.)		
	Low(Below 60,000)	11	37
	Medium(60,000-1,00,000)	3	10
	High(Above 1,00,000)	16	53
4.	Caste		
	Backward Caste	15	50
	Scheduled Caste	1	3
	Scheduled Tribe	1	3
	Other Caste	13	44

Similarly, Ejik et al (2016) investigated on menstrual hygiene management among adolescent girls in India and concluded that strengthening of Menstrual Health management (MHM) programmes in India was needed. Education on awareness, access to hygienic absorbents and disposal of MHM items need to be addressed.

From the data (Table 3), it was observed that about 77per cent of the adolescent girls received menarche by the age of 12-14 yr. Majority (87%) of the adolescent girls had regular menstrual cycle and 77per cent of the girls had normal flow of menstruation. About 93per cent of the adolescent girls have 2-7 days of menstruation which showed that the respondents were healthy. About 93per cent of the girls used sanitary pads as menstrual absorbent material but 70 per cent threw the used menstrual absorbent in dustbin which showed that the urban living respondents were aware of good practices during menstruation.

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Table 2. Existing knowledge about menstruation among adolescent girls.

Sr. No.	Variable	Respondents (N=30)	
		Number	Percentage
1.	Knowledge of organ from where bleeding occurs		
	Uterus	4	13
	Kidney	-	-
	Bladder	3	10
	Stomach	3	10
	Do not know	20	67
2.	Menstrual blood contains dangerous substances		
	Yes	7	23
	No	23	77
3.	Pregnant women menstruate		
	Yes	3	10
	No	27	90
4.	Received any information prior menarche		
	Yes	25	83
	No	5	17
5.	Source of information (before menarche)		
	Mother	24	80
	Sister	1	3
	Friends and relatives	4	14
	Teachers	1	3

Table 3. Menstrual health practices among adolescent girls.

Sr. No.	Variable	Respondents (N=30)	
		Number	Percentage
1.	Age at menarche		
	<12 yr.	5	17
	12-14 yr.	23	77
	>14 yr.	2	6
2.	Menstrual cycle		
	Regular	26	87
	Irregular	4	13
3.	Duration of menstrual flow in days		
	<2	2	7
	2-7	28	93
	>7	-	-

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4.	Amount of menstruation		
	Scanty	3	10
	Normal	23	77
	Excess	4	3
5.	Passage of clots		
	Yes	11	37
	No	19	63
6.	Experience at Menarche		
	Confusing	9	30
	Expectant	12	40
	Frightened	9	30
7.	Type of absorbent used during menstruation		
	Pads	28	93
	Fresh cloth	2	7
	Reusable cloth	-	-
8.	Number of times absorbent changed (per day)		
	<2 times	12	40
	2-5 times	7	23
	>5 times	1	3
	As per need	10	34
9.	Daily bath		
	Yes	28	93
	No	2	7
10.	Disposal of used menstrual absorbent		
	Dust bin	21	70
	Wash and reuse	-	-
	Burn/ bury	6	20
	Flush in toilet	3	10
11.	Cleaning of genital area (per day)		
	<3 times	7	23
	>3 times	18	60
	During bath	3	10
	During micturition	2	7
12.	Agent used for cleaning purpose		
	Only water	8	27
	Soap and water	16	53
	Dettol	6	20
	Others	-	-
13.	Sharing of information about your menstrual health		
	Mother	20	67

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	Sister	3	10
	Friend	7	23
	Teacher	-	-
	Other	-	-
14.	In a normal month days missed during period		
	I don't miss	22	73
	<2	6	20
	2-4	2	7
	>4	-	-

CONCLUSION

The main problematic areas identified in this study were poor knowledge of menstruation, and hygiene practice in few areas like burning and burying of the absorbent used during menstruation and even few respondents did not change the absorbent frequently. This study has highlighted the need of adolescent girls to have accurate and adequate knowledge about menstruation and its appropriate hygiene management. Formal as well as informal channels of communication such as mothers, sisters and friends need to be emphasized for the delivery of such knowledge.

Menstrual health is an important part of life cycle approach to women's health, so loud and clear messages and services on this issue must reach adolescent girls. Schools should be another entry point for improving menstrual health by integrating menstrual hygiene into curriculum. Education has been the key stone in propagating menstrual hygiene practices. Although there is repeated sensitization and reinforcement of all these components among

adolescent school girls, certain components are not being practiced. Strategies such as access to water, sanitation, hygiene of external genitalia and access to covered toilets are still deficient and it plays a major role to adopt safe practices.

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